

Washington State Patrol Media Release

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Washington State Toxicology Laboratory hosts national summit on drug impaired driving

Forensic toxicologists, police officers and prosecuting attorneys from around the country will meet in Seattle on May 24th to discuss growing concerns about high rates of impairing drug use by drivers, and how these cases are investigated and prosecuted.

The meeting, sponsored by the National Highway Safety Administration (NHTSA) was convened by the National Safety Council to bring together the country's leading experts in the field of drug impaired driving detection.

The goal of the group is to develop strategies for expert testimony preparation and guidelines regarding interpretation of drug and alcohol tests in drivers arrested for impaired driving, or following vehicular homicides and assaults.

"The number of drug impaired driving arrests are up 20% in Washington in the last year, and include increases in both illicit and prescription drugs" said Dr. Barry Logan, the Washington State Toxicologist and convener of the conference.

A study of fatally injured drivers in Washington from 2003 showed that about a third of those drivers under the influence of alcohol, were also using drugs which contributed to their impairment.

The Washington State Patrol and allied agencies through the Drug Recognition Expert program have stepped up enforcement of driving under the influence of drugs (DUID) cases. This is part of the WSP core mission, and is contributing towards the decline in traffic fatalities over the last 18 months.

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